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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. HARRIS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 29, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KATHERINE HARRIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

OTHER PEOPLE'S ELECTIONS

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, today I reflect on some of the recent elections held in other countries. While citizens of other countries may have different values about the level of government intervention in areas, let us say in economics or labor rights, overwhelmingly, most citizens of the world would prefer to live in a democracy than a totalitarian-run system. This was presented last summer by the Pew Research Center for the People in the Press. Pew Research Center inter-

viewed over 66,000 people in 44 countries over 2 years. The majority demonstrated strong preferences in democratic governments, even in Muslim countries.

Over the past 3 weeks, other people have elected leaders, sometimes new, sometimes the incumbent. I wish for all, of course, to live under the same sunshine of freedom that we in the United States have here.

In Taiwan Saturday, March 20, incumbent President Chen, Taiwan's pro-independence leader, was declared to have won by a slim margin, just a hair over 50 percent. This election was preceded by threats from mainland China and Chen's international detractors, and jittery nerves by many who urged "don't rock the boat." On election eve, President Chen and his Vice President were shot in a craven attack.

The aftermath of the election is a little calmer: there are street protests and a recount is imminent. Also, in a win for China, though, election authorities nullified the results of a controversial referendum championed by the President because too few voters took part in it.

However, I still see some optimism. The apparent reelection of Chen is sending a message both to Beijing and Washington: while not outright declaring independence, China's people are standing up for their status as a sovereign body; they are not completely buying into Beijing's domineering "One China" policy. Further, I find it telling that while an insufficient number voted in the referendum, of those who did, 90 percent pulled the yes lever to the two questions: one, whether to try to set up a framework for direct talks with China; and, two, whether to buy more advanced weapons if China refuses to move missiles aimed at their island. I wish President Chen every success in my support of his leading his people to a democracy.

Now, let us look at Spain. I understand the emotional and political tu-

mult in which Spain found themselves on March 11 and after. However, I am discouraged that circumstances influenced the election the way they did, for the singular reason that the Spaniards appear to think that the Socialist Party will bring them relief from the retributions of extreme Islamic fundamentalists. I sadly believe they are wrong. Gustavo de Aristegui wrote in The Washington Post on Sunday, March 21: "In 1984, I had a long talk with a high-ranking Sunni cleric in a mosque in Damascus. He was very friendly when he learned that I was a Spaniard. After 2 hours of conversation about politics and theology, which are very much intertwined in that part of the world, he said to me: 'Don't worry, we will liberate Spain from Western corruption.'"

The writer emphasized that this was a moderate, respected clergyman. Now, that is a chilling, foreshadowing, looking into the minds of those who would destroy that way of life in Spain.

Yet, what did Spaniards sacrifice in their election of the Socialist Party candidate? Since 1986, the Partido Popular turned from 21 percent unemployment down to 9 percent, foreign debt from 80 percent to less than 50 percent GDP, a deficit of 6.7 percent of GDP in 1996 to a 0.5 percent surplus in 2002, and a growing economy while much of the world experienced a downturn. This is the stuff that democracies are made of: living economically securely, planning futures, and thriving.

Like President Chen, I support our ally Spain and the new leadership that they have openly and fairly chosen. I only ponder that democracies also value economic prosperity, and capitulation to bullies may compromise that for which they have worked.

Heading east, President Putin won reelection in Russia this month. He has promised to translate his landslide reelection into concrete reforms: modernizing the economy, the bureaucracy,

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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